

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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### **CONYERS: DOJ IMMIGRANT INTERVIEWS PRODUCE** **'NOT ONE SHRED OF EVIDENCE'**

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, issued the following statement regarding a General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation of the Justice Department's interviews of immigrants after September 11, 2001:

"The Justice Department cannot provide a shred of evidence that these 3,000 interviews led to a single piece of useful information about terrorist attacks on the United States. It is now clear why the Attorney General is afraid to let the American people see how he is running the war on terrorism; it is because his Justice Department is waging war on the rights of law-abiding residents.

"Because the Attorney General would not tell the public about his efforts, Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) and I were forced to ask the GAO to investigate the Justice Department's interviews of 7,000 law-abiding immigrants. The key findings of the investigation are:

- The Justice Department could not provide any evidence that the interviews had led to any useful information about terrorist attacks on the United States.
- The Department's guidelines say the interviewees were to be sources of information, not suspects, but the questions asked include: where the person has traveled, why they are in the United States, what they are studying, addresses of family members, what cities and landmarks they have visited in the United States, if they have ever been to Afghanistan, and what access they have to explosives.
- Law enforcement officials said that the interviews negatively affected relations with the Arab community. In fact, the interviewees were afraid even to talk to the GAO about the interviews. Private lawyers involved with the interviews believe the interviewees cooperated because they were afraid of how the Justice Department would retaliate if they did not talk. The letters asking people to appear for interviews did not even mention that interviewees could bring legal counsel with them.

"For years now, the Attorney General has told Congress and the American people that the interviewees welcomed law enforcement agents with open arms, but we find out now that the interviewees were cooperative only because they did not know they could have legal counsel and were afraid of government retaliation. If people are too afraid to talk to the GAO, what chance is there now that people with real information about terrorist threats would call the FBI?

"I can only hope that this utter failure will cause the Attorney General to redirect the resources of his Department and the FBI to better protect us from future threats."

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